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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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March 21, 1994

UM GETS GRANT TO DEVELOP GERONTOLOGY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

MISSOULA --

The University of Montana has received a \$100,000 federal grant to develop an innovative gerontology education program that will extend beyond the University campus to reach professionals and paraprofessionals working with older Montanans in rural communities throughout the state.

The 17-month Gerontology Certificate Development Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging, will develop, test and evaluate three courses that will form the core of the certificate program. Plans call for the program to begin in fall 1995.

The program will use varied distance-education technologies including computer conferencing, interactive video and teleconferencing to reach learners who cannot easily access the University or other sources of traditional, face-to-face instruction, said Project Director Dorothy Bompart.

"This will allow people who are working with the elderly to learn more about what it is they're doing without leaving their jobs," said Charlie Rehbein, coordinator for the state Office on Aging. "A lot of these people need continuing education credits, and it's almost impossible to take time off work to get the credits they need."

"This program has a lot of potential, especially with an aging society," Rehbein said, noting

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that gerontology education will become increasingly essential in the next 10-25 years as the huge baby boomer population reaches retirement age.

Lori Brengle of Glendive, president of the Montana Gerontology Society, said her organization welcomes the program as a much-needed source of professional development.

"This certificate program is just what we're looking for," said Brengle. "We're really excited about it."

The project is a joint effort of UM's Center for Continuing Education and Summer Programs, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences and Rural Institute on Disabilities. Continuing Education Dean Sharon Alexander is the principal investigator for the grant project.

The Montana Gerontology Society, the state Office on Aging and the Montana Association of Area Agencies on Aging will contribute expertise to the project, helping to design the structure and content of the program, Bompart said. An advisory council will be developed, with members representing varied disciplines throughout the state.

This project was one of three nationwide selected for an Administration on Aging grant to develop distance-learning technologies to further gerontology education. Other recipients are the Oregon Health Sciences Center, which will connect four Oregon community colleges through teleconferencing, and the American Society on Aging, which will develop a computer-assisted program on late-life depression and suicide.

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Local, dailies and weeklies
Gerontol.rl